

MEMORANDUM

NATIONAL SECURITY COUNCIL

SECRET/EYES ONLY

URGENT ACTION

May 12, 1972

MEMORANDUM FOR: MR. KISSINGER

FROM: JOHN D. NEGROPONTE

SUBJECT: Political Supports for Thieu From Retired and Inactive Generals

Thieu needs all the support he can get at this juncture from the quiescent and fence-sitting retired or inactive generals. Otherwise, they are prey to Communist efforts to lure them over to their 3-segment national concord government concept-particularly if there are some more temporary but inconclusive military reverses.

Some recent signs are encouraging, such as Big Minh's remarks to an American observer that a coalition government would lead to Communist domination and a disastrous bloodbath.

Vice President Ky is casting about for a role and told an American observer on May 10 that Thieu should make a public gesture of cooperation toward him as a way of demonstrating unity in the face of the present crisis. Ky said he would offer to be responsible for a refugee program or a similar task.

These problems always cut both ways. If Thieu tries to enlist the support of these men, he becomes to some extent dependent on them and one could argue that this approach will slide you back towards the kind of consensus politics and committee rule which plagued the GVN decision making apparatus from 1964-67. On the other hand, Thieu needs all the help he can get as long as he doesn't encumber his ability to act decisively in the process.

I think for starters a gesture to Ky might be a good thing and if skillfully handled would mean one less fifth-wheel bouncing around at this critical time. How Thieu does it, is obviously up to him; but I have drafted a back-channel ^{to provide} which plants this thought and suggests he may wish to pursue it with Thieu.

Recommendation:

That you approve the message to Ambassador Bunker at Tab A.

Approve _____ Disapprove _____